Nov. 9, 2012

Marie Jennings
Manager, Drinking Water Unit
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900
Seattle, WA 98101

Dear Ms. Jennings:

As a follow-up to your phone conversation on Oct. 12 with City Editor Craig Troianello, the Yakima Herald-Republic seeks formal correction to information contained on Page 1 of the Environmental Protection Agency's report "Relations Between Nitrate in Water Wells and Potential Sources in the Lower Yakima Valley, Washington."

The line reads: "In October 2008, the Yakima Herald-Republic ran a series of articles titled 'Hidden Wells, Dirty Water' that examined a long history of groundwater contamination affecting public and private drinking water wells, primarily in the Lower Yakima Valley. The reporter sent a letter requesting that EPA invoke Section 1431 of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) to address the problem."

Because the EPA was not quoted as part of the series, Lower Yakima Valley residents asked our reporter after publication whether the EPA had authority to take action under the Clean Water Act. That prompted reporter Leah Beth Ward to write the aforementioned letter with the intent of finding out whether the law was applicable. She did not request that the Act be invoked; unfortunately, the report you released Sept. 27 mischaracterized what she wrote. That was understood by your agency in its Nov. 4, 2008, response by regional administrator Elin D. Miller. In that letter to the reporter, Ms. Miller states, "You specifically asked whether the EPA would consider invoking Section 1431 of the Safe Drinking Water Act to address the groundwater issue." It then went on to explain elements that would be considered.

The Herald-Republic considers your report's error to be serious. The newspaper does not inject itself or take an active role in issues it covers. Doing so would undermine the neutrality critical to maintaining credibility. Stating that the newspaper sought to invoke the act undermines that credibility.

I ask the EPA to correct the statement by amending the report, and that the statement be correct in both printed and electronic reports, including those online.

I also ask the EPA to send a letter to the Washington State Dairy Federation notifying them of the correction, as well as including this letter in the record along with other comments you receive on your report. The Dairy Federation's address is: P.O. Box 1768, Elma, Wash.

Thank you.

Bob Crider, Editor
Yakima Herald-Republic

CC: Leah Beth Ward, Craig Troianello

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